

May 13, 2004

Study Questions

Read: Bengtson: Beyond the Nuclear Family: The Increasing Importance of Multigenerational Bonds. Skolnick 457-478
Hutter: Intimate Strangers: The Elderly and Homecare Worker Relationships. Hutter 290-300

1. Describe Bengtson's argument regarding the increasing importance of multigenerational family bonds. Critique it.
2. Give four examples from our reading that illustrate multigenerational family bonds.
3. How did urbanization, increased individualism and secularism, and the emancipation of women transform the family, according to Burgess?
4. What two family functions can only be performed by the nuclear family, according to sociologist David Popenoe?
5. Do you define "family" as a coresident household, primarily represented by the nuclear family? Why or why not?
6. Bengtson speaks of the "postmodern family condition." Discuss.
7. What are the reasons some Americans are discovering that multigenerational bonds are becoming more important to them than nuclear family ties?
8. We can speak of a shortage of kin and an expanding of kin in the future. Discuss.
9. What do you think: that families are losing most of their social functions along with their diminished structures because of high divorce rates and a growing absence of fathers (Popenoe), or what's happening is that families are becoming more diverse in structure and form?
10. What is the "sandwich generation?"
11. List all of the reasons why the increasing number of adult children caring for their parents presents problems.
12. What percentage of home care is provided by "intimate strangers" (paid caregivers)?
13. The best paid home caregivers do "emotion work." What is it?
14. What changes need to be made to improve the way frail elderly people are taken care of in this society?

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